

**To: The Honorable Pamela Johnson-Betts, Secretary
Kansas Department on Aging
From: Debra Harmon Zehr, Executive Vice President
Date: July 13, 2005**

Kansas Department on Aging Solutions Forum

Testimony Creating the Future of Aging Services

Thank you, Madam Secretary. In its first fifty years of existence, KAHSA and its members have emerged as leaders in the provision of an array of aging services, and, most recently, in the movement to transform facility-based long term care. In 2004, the KAHSA Board of Directors concluded that the single focus of the Association is to empower and equip members to transform into what their customers want. And here's our "snapshot" perspective of what elders want:

Community – To sustain and grow individual and community relationships.

Quality – To have services that support their desired quality of life, delivered by caring, competent persons.

Value – To have access to reasonably priced, efficient services.

Choice – To decide their pattern of daily living and choose from a spectrum of services to meet their changing needs and preferences.

The Department on Aging, KAHSA and other stakeholders should work together to create an array of integrated, high quality service options based on what elders want and to begin planning NOW for the major pressure for aging services that will happen when baby boomers begin to reach age 80 years and older in 2026 and beyond.

Here are some ideas to move us toward these goals.

Foster the Diversification and Transformation of Aging Service Providers.

Currently many facility-based long term care providers who have been committed to serving elders for decades are at risk for closing. When they do close, elders will have NO nearby choices for care and services, and many local citizens will be unemployed. KDOA should work intensely with KAHSA and other public and private stakeholders to review and modify regulation and reimbursement in order to create a system that catalyzes facility-based aging service providers to evolve and diversify into services that elders want.

Conduct a Rural Aging Services Pilot Project. Engage local stakeholders and statewide public and private partners in one or two rural communities to work together to 1) assess the strengths and weaknesses of their current aging services support system, 2) project future needs, 3) create a comprehensive and coordinated community aging services action plan and 4) act to address policy barriers to optimize implementation. This process, once evaluated, could be implemented in other communities throughout the state.

Engage in Technology Demonstration Projects. The state should contract with academic institutions and other groups to “test drive” monitoring, prevention and other technologies to improve quality of life and reduce/contain costs of care and services.

Transitions Management Demonstration Project KDOA, KDHE and other provider and consumer stakeholders should come together to focus on improving elders’ transitions between various levels of acute, ambulatory and long term care. As we develop, disseminate and diffuse best practices in transition management, we can improve quality of life and care for elders and reap economic benefits.

Thank you for this opportunity. We look forward to cooperating and collaborating with KDOA and others who are interested in creative approaches, policy examination and modifications to give elders what they want. I look forward to discussing our ideas in more depth.